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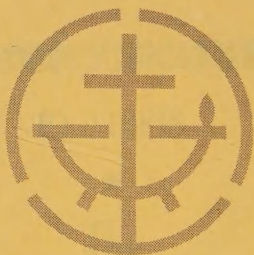


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THE NEXT STEP

A STUDY IN METHODIST POLITY

PAUL HUTCHINSON



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AT CLAREMONT
California

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TO
DAN B. BRUMMITT
A Methodist Unafraid

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Drew, 11-25-57

CONTENTS

	PAGE
PREFACE	7
I. VENTURING FORTH ALONE.....	11
II. A BIT OF HISTORY.....	22
III. SPANISH EMPIRE OR BRITISH ?	36
IV. THE PRESENT SITUATION	46
V. LESSENING LONG DISTANCE CONTROL	58
VI. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CENTRAL CON- FERENCE	70
VII. DOCTRINE AND ORDER IN A WORLD CHURCH	82
VIII. COMMON AGENCIES IN A WORLD CHURCH.	99
IX. THE TIME LIMIT.....	111

PREFACE

FUTURE historians of the Methodist Episcopal Church will probably agree that the most important action taken at the General Conference of 1920 was that which placed in the Book of Discipline the amended paragraph at present numbered 95. That the action took place without arousing more than passing interest indicates how blindly we may be progressing toward radical alterations in our forms of church administration.

It is time that our entire denomination knew that the major administrative problem with which we are now confronted is that of determining our policy toward the portions of our body that are growing with such rapidity outside the borders of the United States.

Our experience in Japan, which culminated in the formation of the Japan

Methodist Church in 1907, should warn us that this is a subject concerning which we cannot hope to "muddle through" to a successful issue. Our leaders in such lands as China and India are watching closely; and if they see that we are content to muddle where they are so vitally concerned, they will decide that they are capable of doing their own muddling.

This tract aims to secure discussion of this problem, for intelligent discussion will lead to intelligent action. I have used China as my background for obvious reasons, but I think that I am justified in believing that the principles advanced apply to all our mission fields.

An effort has been made to avoid the use of such terms as "native church," "native worker," "home base" and the like, now in such disrepute with Brother Li, my mythical hero, and his countrymen. But when, in order to avoid cumbersome circumlocutions, some of these phrases have slipped in, I trust that

Brother Li will charge that to the poverty of my vocabulary rather than to any inner spirit of condescension.

Anyone familiar with that thoughtful study of mission work in India, *Devolution in Mission Administration*, by Professor D. J. Fleming (New York: 1916), will see that I have, with the permission of F. H. Revell & Co., taken generous portions of my material from its pages. I do not apologize for this; rather I cite it as proof that no member of our church should reach conclusions upon this subject until he has taken Dr. Fleming's book into account.

Permission to quote from "The Outline of History," by H. G. Wells, has been given by The Macmillan Company.

As for the rest of my material, it has come to me in the course of my work in China, sometimes when traveling through our Conferences and sometimes when our Chinese brethren have sought my office or my home. All of it I send

forth as a loyal son of the Methodist Episcopal Church, whose love for her welfare prompts whatever plain speaking may appear.

P. H.

Shanghai, China.

I

VENTURING FORTH ALONE

THE Methodist Episcopal Church is, apparently, committed to a great adventure. It is seeking to establish an ecclesiastical organization world wide in scope but democratic in nature.

None of the other Protestant bodies holds before itself any such goal. It is doubtful if even the other members of the Methodist family have in view such an outcome for their missionary efforts. These other churches, Methodist and otherwise, would probably judge such an undertaking as the Methodist Episcopal Church has entered upon a mistaken policy, holding that the building of the universal kingdom of God may best be secured through the founding and growth of national churches.

It seems plain, however, that the Methodist Episcopal Church, without

formal action, has moved into a decision to disregard all national lines and to attempt to project its influence permanently as an international body. It has apparently determined to indorse the ideal set forth at the General Conference of 1912 by Bishop Bashford:

The whole trend of modern history is toward world-wide affiliations; . . . The key to the twentieth century is internationalism as nationalism was of the nineteenth century. . . . It will be a thousand pities if at the very time when Christ's conception of a universal kingdom is beginning to capture the imagination of the world, Methodism, assembled in a General Conference in which representatives of twenty nations sit side by side, should attempt to reverse the Divine Providence, abandon her birthright embodied in John Wesley's motto, "The world is my parish," and begin the organization of a national church for China, a national church for Mexico, a national church for Siberia.

All the acts and decisions of the General Conference, the Board of Bishops, the Board of Foreign Missions, and

other church authorities since Bishop Bashford spoke those words point to an espousal of this international but closely articulated policy.

As early as 1908 the Episcopal Address, under the influence of recent action establishing the Methodist Church of Japan, cautioned the General Conference against further authorization of independent churches requiring financial assistance.

In 1912 the General Conference bore witness to Bishop Bashford's influence by voting in favor of federation in the work of the nine Methodist bodies in China, but against any act that might involve a severance of organic connection with the home churches.

When the Centenary program was launched in 1916 effort was made from the first to have a due part borne by the portions of the church without the United States, and this part has increased as the Centenary period has advanced.

Even during the passionate period of the World War and its aftermath it has been interesting to note how much has been done, despite occasional outbursts, to soothe the sensibilities of the sections of the church that might have been offended by the American political program, and so keep the ranks of the church family unbroken.

Finally, the General Conference of 1920 made the policy of the church too clear for mistake when it sent seventeen general superintendents to residences outside the United States; abolished the missionary bishopric; assented to what was, in effect, the election of bishops for particular races; enlarged the powers of Central Conferences on the mission fields; and, more significant than anything else in the eyes of the church abroad, elected a subject of the king of Denmark to be a general superintendent.

Surely here we have a definite policy to develop a church that shall include

under one control adherents in many lands, without regard to racial or national considerations.

Does the church realize what it has done, or is in process of doing?

The Methodist Episcopal Church has before this entered upon policies of far-reaching import when the majority of its members had little conception of what was in progress. It must not be allowed to do so in this instance. In this day when the very words "nationalism" and "internationalism," "democracy," "self-government," and "self-determination" are becoming focal for the life of the whole world, it is no small thing to see the Methodist Episcopal Church, *our church, alone* in Protestantism adopting a policy which may in time give it as wide-sweeping an ecclesiastical authority as that of the Church of Rome. Surely such an estate "is not by any to be entered into unadvisedly, but reverently, discreetly, and in the fear of God."

In speaking of this as a policy already adopted the discerning reader will note that from the first sentence it has been necessary to insert qualifying words. This necessity arises because such decision as there has been up to this date has been largely that of the church in America. It must, therefore, be regarded as tentative until it is finally indorsed by the church in other lands. For my friend Li Ching Shen, who keeps the little shop on the Street of Ten Thousand Lanterns and voted for Exhorter Wang as his representative to the Lay Electoral Conference (without having more than the haziest idea of what a Lay Electoral Conference is), has rights in determining the course of his church equal to those of my friend George Washington Smith, who is the pillar of Saint Paul's and hopes to sit in the next General Conference. And Brother Li has not yet made up his mind whether he wishes to remain a part of a world church or whether he

wants a Chinese Methodist church of his own, in which might be included his friend, Class Leader Shen, from the British Wesleyan church up the river.

To be sure, Bishop Bashford, in the speech already quoted, told the General Conference of 1912 that:

After free discussion of the national as over against the universal church, the Central Conference for China on the eloquent appeal of a Chinese statesman that the Chinese Methodists keep the cross above the flag and maintain their seat around the family hearthstone, voted overwhelmingly against the national conception and for the maintenance by Chinese Methodists of their birth-right in ecumenical Methodism.

But if anyone thinks that a vote taken in 1912, or even in such a body as might be gathered in China to-day, represents the final judgment of the Chinese members of the Methodist Episcopal Church, he is badly misled. Final judgment will not come for two or more quadrenniums.

(Some might ask, studying Bishop

Bashford's words, just what he meant by that "ecumenical Methodism" for which the Central Conference of China voted. But this problem is broader and deeper than any mere nicety of definition.)

I can speak, of course, only from the standpoint of China. But there are suggestions that the same suspension of judgment is true in other fields. For example, in his study of the missionary situation in India, *Devolution in Mission Administration*, Professor D. J. Fleming quotes two Indian leaders of our church in this fashion:

So long as the foreign missionaries keep entire control of the affairs of the church in India, and govern it in their own way instead of *adapting it to suit the country*, the church will have a foreign stamp on it and the non-Christians will continue to regard it as an exotic and Occidental religion. (The italics are mine.)

The people should have more voice in the management of affairs.

And we are all familiar with the course of events in Japan.

What is the true situation as regards Brother Li and his fellows? They are just awakening to a recognition of the interests that they have at stake; they are watching with increasing closeness the form of our world church as it develops; in the meantime they suspend judgment as to whether or not they wish finally to be a part of this church. If the development takes forms which they do not approve, or if it does not come fast enough to suit them, they will then exercise the right of veto or secession.

One thing is clear (and it may well be mentioned at the beginning, although we will give it more detailed study in a later chapter) and that is that Brother Li and his fellows regard as a fundamental and immediate requirement for a world church an increased authority for native leaders, with a corresponding decrease in power for foreigners.

Here is the way in which Mr. A. C. Mukerji put it, as quoted by Professor Fleming:

It is a question of placing an Indian brother in the position of a European missionary with equal powers of initiation, organization, direction, and control. A young recruit from Europe and America is often placed over the heads of Indians who have turned gray in mission service, who have proved their worth by years of successful service. Whatever reasons may be given in justification of the system, none of them are considered satisfactory by Indian workers.

Recently I heard Dr. C. T. Wang, the most prominent Christian in China, the son of a Wesleyan pastor, express the same sentiments. Remarks to the same effect made by Dr. Mary Stone before a meeting held in connection with the last General Conference were carefully elided before the speech was given to the press.

It was significant to note that, upon the return to China of a Chinese woman who has probably won more attention

than any other Methodist worker of her sex in this country, among the reasons put forward to explain her resignation from the work with which she had for years been identified, emphasis was placed upon her desire to escape from unwelcome trammels placed about her by foreign missionaries. It is beside the point to discuss the truth of the charge. The thing to note is that this was selected as an explanation which would be comprehended by Chinese, and arouse sympathy.

Apparently the Methodist Episcopal Church is committed to a development as an international unity. But Brother Li has as much part in this unit as Brother Smith. He can wreck it as effectually as Smith, should he so desire. Therefore it is the purpose of this tract to study this policy from the standpoint of Brother Li, in order to suggest those modes of progress that will enlist his support.

II

A BIT OF HISTORY

THAT the decision to develop the Methodist Episcopal Church "in its organic form . . . in Africa, Asia, and Europe" (Episcopal Address, *Discipline*, 1920, pp. 3, 4) is comparatively recent is clear from the most cursory examination of the history of the denomination. From the beginning until long after the church had entered upon its second century there seemed no conception but that, when any branch outside the borders of the United States had reached a measure of self-confidence, it should be set apart as a distinct entity.

The story of the establishment of the Methodist Episcopal Church is familiar. It is, in essence, the story of a mission that found three thousand miles of separation, with the slow communica-

tions of the eighteenth century and the strained political situation arising out of the Revolutionary War, too heavy a handicap to allow organic union with the home base.

Charles Wesley was horrified at the method which his brother took to enable the members of his societies in America to "stand fast in the liberty wherewith God has so strangely made them free." John Wesley himself hesitated long, and secured several years of postponement, before consenting to the radical step. But the step was forced upon him. Always alive to the logic of a situation, Wesley perceived that if he persisted in refusing the request first made at the Philadelphia Conference of 1779, the societies would sink into a "desolate state" of "schism and disintegration," and that only by a bold stroke "could the religious welfare of great numbers of his fellow men be conserved" (Winchester, *Life of Wesley*, pp. 242, 247). He therefore "set apart" Coke and As-

bury. But Asbury, aware of the temper of the American societies, refused to accept any office that was not voted to him by the American pastors, and as much by that action—which drew Coke with it—as by the formal adoption of the scheme of government suggested by Mr. Wesley, marked the complete independence of the young Methodist Episcopal Church.

It may be argued that this was no recognition of the principle of setting up independent national churches, because at that time there was no Methodist or Wesleyan Church in England. But there was John Wesley, and for all the quibbling concerning his churchmanship that may be indulged in, there is no question but that he held entire control, both legal and actual, of all the “united societies.” To secure independence from him was as clear a change of policy as it would have been to have sought freedom from any incorporated body.

Having started as an independent national body the Methodist Episcopal Church next faced the question of its policy toward work outside its borders in the strong church that had grown up in Canada. It is unnecessary to give that story at length. The conclusion is the point of value, for it shows in 1828 the withdrawal of the mother church and the establishment of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Canada, which was later to amalgamate with other bodies in the Dominion.

It is interesting to note that when foreign missions, in the usual acceptance of that term, were really getting under way, with the founding of work in Liberia, the Episcopal Address to the General Conference of 1856 offered three solutions for the problems thus raised, two of which (that the General Conference elect a bishop and send him to Africa to organize an independent church there, or that the Africans be urged to organize themselves, elect a

bishop, and send him to America for consecration) looked directly toward the cutting off of a work that was only in its infancy. In the same General Conference it was urged that the jurisdiction of the Methodist Episcopal Church is limited to the United States of America, necessitating the erection of independent churches when expansion without the national borders occurred (vide Fleming, *op. cit.*, p. 71).

Documentary evidence as to any settled policy in regard to the congregations that have grown up in continental Europe is lacking, but I have heard it said that there have been unofficial negotiations looking toward the setting of these free from debt, with the hope that they would thereafter control their own life.

The outstanding experience of recent years is, of course, that connected with the Methodist Church of Japan. There is apparent within American Methodism a tendency to regard the estab-

lishment of this church, or at least the part played in that transaction by the Methodist Episcopal Church, as a mistake. The fact is that it was an action brought about by forces over which no body in America could exert control. And a clear perception of those forces as they worked in Japan may be of value in guiding the church in its future conduct in other mission lands.

We are considering this question, be it remembered, from the standpoint of Asia. There are tremendous nationalistic currents flowing through Asia in these days, comprising the most vital, most helpful, and the most dangerous realities influencing the future of this continent. If you take the map of Methodist missions in Asia, you may be startled to realize that there have been revolutions and revolts since the opening of this century in China, Korea, the Philippines, the Dutch Indies, and India. It would be as sensible to plan for our future here without taking into ac-

count the necessity of training native workers as without considering this growth of the spirit of nationalism.

This spirit first awakened in the East in Japan, and it has there had its greatest development. Say what you will about the policies of the Imperial Japanese government, Japan, with its intense devotion to the cult of nationalism, has been since 1894 for all the Orient a nation set on a hill. The defeat of Russia in 1905 placed the final Q. E. D. after Japan's demonstration of the theorem that an Oriental nation can achieve power by the cultivation of an intense national life as surely and as quickly as an Occidental.

Just in the proportion that the Christian Church, rising in a new land, identifies itself with the life of that land, will it show the influence of such forces as this rising national consciousness. Long before Japan fought China for the leadership of the Far East and the right to demonstrate her theorem, the increase

of the nationalistic spirit had pointed toward the setting up of independent national churches. In fact, so closely is Methodism linked up that the Japanese Methodists were the last in the list of important Protestant communions to erect their own ecclesiastical establishment. There was a Presbyterian Assembly in Japan as early as 1880; it is remarkable that, with no effort made to adapt the Methodist system to the intense national spirit, the Methodists should have remained under long-range control for a quarter of a century after that.

When the day of independence came the Methodist Episcopal Church greeted it with reluctance. The words of farewell spoken by the commissioners of the mother churches make that plain:

We need not remind you that the people of the United States and Canada respect the right of every other civilized people to regulate their own affairs without compulsory interference from abroad. The gov-

erning bodies of our several churches did not hesitate to recognize this principle when they were petitioned to grant independent organization to their societies in Japan, though we dare not conceal the fact that their action was taken not without regret, and even with serious misgivings in the minds of many, as to the expediency of such a radical movement at this juncture, while we have as yet so very few self-supporting churches in the empire (*General Conference Journal*, 1908, p. 942).

But this adds to the impressiveness of the precedent, for it shows that when, less than twenty years ago, we were faced with a demand for liberty from a church on the mission field, despite all our fears, we felt that we had no real alternative to the granting of this demand. And, if we are not willing to plunge one of these churches into discord and perhaps stunt forever its spiritual growth, we have none. If the Philippine Islands should achieve independence during the coming quadrennium, and the Methodists of the Philip-

pires, who have been from the beginning largely self-supporting in their church life, should demand the right to independence, we would hardly dare refuse them. In all our planning for the future in Asia of this world-wide Methodism about which we talk, we must not forget that the precedent of Japan has been made, and stands where every congregation in the Orient sees it.¹

It was immediately following the set-

¹It must be understood that elements other than a desire for national self-control entered into the formation of the Japan Methodist Church. In a recent conversation Dr. Arthur D. Berry, dean of the Theological Seminary at Aoyama Gakuin, Tokyo, pointed out that, in Japan, the formation of the national church is spoken of as "the union," and that the paramount consideration impelling the churches to unite was a desire to have but one Methodist organization where previously there had been three considerably overlapping each other. That there was, however, influence exerted by the nationalistic spirit of Japan is not denied. In this connection, church leaders must remember that the same situation may arise in other fields. In China, for instance, there are now nine different Methodist organizations at work. Fortunately, there is practically no overlapping, although for purposes of administration it seems wise to place the residence of one bishop in a city where the Methodist Episcopal Church has neither evangelistic, educational, nor medical work, and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, has all three.

ting up of the independent Methodist Church of Japan that the Methodist Episcopal Church, as indicated in the previous chapter, gave its first clear indication of a change of policy. The warning against setting apart other national churches uttered in 1908 found its strongest supporter in Bishop J. W. Bashford, an outstanding statesman. In the words spoken to the General Conference of 1912 Bishop Bashford¹ depicted as one of the greatest contributions to international good will that can be made at this critical stage of the world's affairs the conception of a church unbound by race or color or the narrowing spirit of nationalism.

From the standpoint of Asia this conception, although it stands alone amid the policies of the great Protestant bodies, bears the stamp of prophetic statesmanship. Ever since the beginning of aggressive Christian expansion in the Far East, there has been a deal

¹See page 12.

said about Christian ideals, but there has been, and still is, all too little exemplification of the application of those ideals to human affairs. The yellow man and the Hindu, excluded from one Christian state after another, cannot be too much blamed if they come to regard Christianity as a religion without larger powers for brotherhood than other faiths. (In sober truth, without as large a power for brotherhood as Mohammedanism.)

We have not yet, as a church or churches, reached the point where we have vision or courage enough to attempt the solution of the baffling problems involved in such a racial-economic question as the exclusion laws. Surely we cannot dream that these questions are to be passed over forever in silence by the church. But in the meantime we can do nothing that will show more clearly our devotion to the ideal of international solidarity than to develop a church with as great a privilege for the

member in China as for the member in America.

At the same time there may be a more selfish, yet no less important, reason for the development of a world church. For such an outreaching may go far toward saving the soul of the church in America alive. There never can be quite the same relationship between a mother church and her daughter after the daughter sets up her own housekeeping as there was while she lived at home. And a church forced constantly to think of *itself* in terms of Asia, Africa, and Europe may find it impossible to withdraw within that circle of close-guarded nationalism that, more surely than anything else, can rob the church of its last hope of great spiritual and moral power.

Of one thing we may be sure, that this is not a day for ecclesiastical stand-pat-ism. The fact that we are embarking upon a policy which differs from that of the past, or that this policy differs from

that of other Protestant bodies, need not and does not worry us. The genius of Methodism is pragmatic. We have established methods and modified customs without regard to tradition, but always to secure an organization that will work. If the building of a world church works, effectively, for the establishment of the Kingdom, we are concerned with nothing more. If it does not work, it will not take us long to change. Nor will all the theories that might be propounded hold us to the promotion of an unsuccessful policy.

III

SPANISH EMPIRE OR BRITISH?

SINCE the Methodist Episcopal Church has decided that its future lies in development as an international organization, the immediate problem concerns the form that this world body is to take. Common sense tells us that the administration of a body so complex will require the readjustment of many methods, and may call for the establishment of agencies and forms that are wholly new.

Our only precedent, when we undertake to determine what the form of a world church shall be, is that supplied by the Church of Rome. With the general outlines of that powerful ecclesiastical structure we are all familiar. Rome represents autocracy in religion. Her power—and it is a power—passes from the head, the papacy, down until

it reaches the remotest priest in the remotest parish of the remotest island where she has planted her altars. The communicant, in theory and often in practice, is under the command of the priest; the priest of the bishop; the bishop of the archbishop; the archbishop of the cardinal (the "prince of the church"); and the cardinal of the pope. There are no gaps in the system, and when, in times past, some parts have shown signs of getting out from under the sway of the higher authorities, Rome has not hesitated to abolish them, no matter how bright their record of service. If one is willing to accept the principle of autocracy in order to secure a world church that *works*, Rome presents the perfect example.

In this connection, however, it is of interest to note that China furnishes one of the outstanding instances of the failure of this method when applied to a proud people. In the famous Rites Controversy of the seventeenth and

eighteenth centuries the Jesuit and Dominican fathers were forced to submit questions concerning Chinese vocabulary and customs to the judgment of a succession of popes; the attempt to influence that judgment by a pronouncement on the part of the Chinese emperor as the leader of the nation's *literati* only led to the charge of seeking to place the word of a local, temporal, and heathen monarch over that of the Lord's regent; the emperor finally became convinced that his political authority was being undermined by this supposedly spiritual ruler on the other side of the earth, and the result was that the Catholic missions, which had seemed, under the favor of the court, bound straight for dominance, came down in ruin. The whole incident affords striking illustration of the dangers incident to trying to understand and rule the ecclesiastical affairs of a people at a distance and under a totally different atmosphere.

It hardly needs to be said that the Methodist Episcopal Church will not look to Rome to supply the model for its world organization. And if, having rejected Rome, no other precedents remain, Methodism will not hesitate to carve out her own. It may do the entire cause of the Kingdom good to have one church engaged upon a mighty enterprise without constantly looking back, because, forsooth, she has no "back" to look to.

But if there is no ecclesiastical precedent by which Methodism may be guided, there are other precedents of at least suggestive value. It is possible to draw an analogy between the thing which the Methodist Episcopal Church is attempting to do and the way in which, in the political realm, great peoples have attempted to set up world empires. From this analogy, without slavish imitation, we may catch suggestions upon which we may confidently build.

In modern history there have been

two world governments that have included widely varying peoples within their sway and have endured for considerable periods. It will be worth our while to study the Spanish and British Empires.

The Spanish Empire once held possessions in North America, South America, Africa, Asia, and Europe. At one time it thought it held, thanks to the generosity of the Pope, a blanket deed to most of the New World. And, deeply as the democrat may dissent from the sort of empire which Spain builded, there can be no denying the impression its size makes upon us.

This Spanish Empire was a pure autocracy, with final power held in the court at Madrid. To be sure, some of the governors, far from Europe, could in those days of poor communications at times conduct themselves like independent monarchs. But even the injustice of the fate handed out to Columbus serves to show that, in the end, the real

power resided in Spain. The governors of the various colonies were sent out from Spain; the colonies were developed ("exploited" is the truer term) for the enrichment of Spain.

And it should be noted that if ever colonies seemed suited to government of that kind, the Spanish colonies did. Not only were the Spaniards, except in the Netherlands, dealing with undeveloped peoples, but these peoples showed no ability to coalesce to shake off the yoke fastened upon them. It required two hundred years for some of them to reach the point where they could protest effectively. Yet the Spanish Empire is a thing of the past. There still exists in Madrid (or did upon the day this was written) the most pompous court in Europe. But the glory has departed.

In contrast we raise the picture of the British Empire. Again we find a political organization holding power over territories in North America,

South America, Africa, Asia, Australasia, and Europe. It is the empire upon which the sun never sets.

In studying its history we see how near the British Empire was to making the same mistake that ruined the Spanish. To be sure, the British Empire as we now know it has been more of a growth than a deliberately designed and carried out plan. But at the beginning there was every sign that, if designers could work their will, the result would be much like the centralized autocracy of Madrid. It took the American Revolution to teach Great Britain the folly of that policy, but teach it it did. The British Empire in large part exists as it does to-day because of the ability of England to learn the lessons of history. And where the empire may show signs of strain, it is because the lessons that apply to those quarters have not yet been clearly discovered or heeded.

What has been the result of this readiness to accept instruction? It is to be

seen in the group of self-governing nations—for such the decisions of the Paris Peace Conference admits them to be—that form the backbone of the modern empire. Granted that you must take Ireland and India and Egypt into the reckoning. But for Egypt even Lord Milner now advocates independence. The trend toward home rule for India has, although slowly, begun. And, surely, the better instincts of British political thought will prevail to give Ireland freedom at least equal to that of South Africa.

The British Empire, says Mr. Wells, “was and is a quite unique political combination; nothing of the sort has ever existed before” (*Outline of History*, ii. p. 470). One is forced to the belief that, in this age, no political combination of such size could exist except on the basis toward which the British Empire is so rapidly tending—equal freedom and equal rights for all its parts. For we are getting past the day

where a despotism, even of a foreign office, can survive, cloaked though it may be under such phrases as "the white man's burden."

So, then, the problem that the Methodist Episcopal Church must solve within the next few years may be largely expressed in terms of this political analogy. Do we intend to build a Spanish or a British empire?

The first is unthinkable. We believe that finally autocracy must fail as the basis for a world church, even as it has failed as the basis for world empire. That is why we reject the model offered us by Rome; that as truly as any disbelief in Rome's doctrinal basis.

But the second is possible. It is not only possible; it is the natural, the attractive thing to do. It is astonishing what a parallel can be drawn between the development now opening before the Methodist Episcopal Church and that of the British Empire.

We have planted our banners in

North America, South America, Africa, Asia, and Europe. At the home base we have a control, in the General Conference, already more democratic than that of the British Parliament, for it contains representatives from all parts of our field. It is even possible to regard the experiences undergone in Japan as our American Revolution. And if we gather wisdom from the past as we should, we may now encourage the growth of our work in all mission lands on the basis of self-respect, self-support, and self-control.

It is a plain path that stretches before us. Are we actually entering upon it?

IV

THE PRESENT SITUATION

THERE are 166 Annual Conferences, Mission Conferences and Missions in the Methodist Episcopal Church. Do we realize that 48, or more than 29 per cent, of these are on the so-called foreign field? And that if the authorizations of the last General Conference are all carried into effect, there will be 60 Conferences and Missions outside the United States, and but 111 within, raising the proportion to 35 per cent? We already have 45 per cent of our active bishops in service abroad.

There were in 1919 (the last year for which official figures are available) 3,795,979 full members and 383,543 preparatory members of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Do we realize that 235,530 of the full members (almost six per cent) and 269,601 of the preparatory members (seventy per cent)

lived outside the United States, and that, in addition, there are thousands of inquirers, that beginning stage of church connection required by the peculiar problems of the foreign field?

(Note that we have reached the point on our mission fields where the number ready to come into full membership is more than equal to all who are in that connection, in contrast to the ten per cent of preparatory members that is normal for our church as a whole.)

It is frequently said that self-government for the infant church should be based upon its ability to support its own life. In 1919 the Board of Foreign Missions disbursed to the major mission fields as follows:

Regular disbursements.	\$1,361,302	26
Designated gifts.	922,217	01
Emergency appropriations.	38,289	27
Incidental needs.	44,620	81
Total	\$2,366,429	35

In the same year the churches in these fields contributed as follows:

Eastern Asia.....	\$116,517 00
Southern Asia.....	326,693 00
Africa, Central and Southern.	20,990 00
Latin America.....	217,871 00
Europe and North Africa...	1,166,955 00
Total	\$1,849,026 00

And this large sum, equal to 78 per cent of the support contributed by the Board of Foreign Missions, can scarcely include all that is provided by these young churches. For instance, much of the appropriation made by the Board goes for the support of schools. Yet in 1919, if you included the amounts from local sources put into its schools, the North China Conference alone raised \$119,647—more than we have reported to the credit of all Eastern Asia!¹

Moreover, it must be remembered

¹ Since this was written the figures for 1920 have been published. It is a little difficult to detect surely

that a large part of the appropriations made by the Board of Foreign Missions (much more than one half) must go to the support of the *foreign* force maintained in the field. So that even if you say that now we should make comparisons on the basis of the post-Centenary appropriation (comparisons which are impossible until the next annual report of the Board is available) you must bear in mind that a very large part of the increased giving has been expended in sending new missionaries to the field and supporting them there. One mis-

the full disbursement to the fields, but they seem to be:

Regular disbursements.....	\$5,816,400	73
Emergency appropriations.....	70,021	87
Incidental needs.....	157,582	22
Total.....	\$6,043,984	82

At the same time the fields gave:

Eastern Asia.....	\$175,168	00
Southeastern Asia.....	88,757	00
Southern Asia.....	203,100	00
Africa.....	24,077	00
Latin America.....	138,240	00
Europe and North Africa.....	3,448,650	00
Total.....	\$4,077,992	00

In other words, even during this Centenary period of increased giving, the church abroad is giving 67 per cent as much as is disbursed by the Board of Foreign Missions.

sion in China, for example, has analyzed its appropriations under the Centenary and finds a scarcely perceptible increase in the funds available for building and running new churches, schools, and medical plants, but an increase of 118 per cent in providing additions to the number of foreign missionaries.

It is the purpose of this chapter to give an outline of the way in which this rapidly growing work—in its indigenous features much more self-supporting than many know—is administered. What is the church machine of which Brother Li Ching Shen finds himself a part?

Its supreme lawmaking body is, of course, the General Conference. Brother Li has no clear idea as to what the General Conference is, because the law of the church specifies that it shall hold its sessions at least five thousand miles away. (*Discipline*, ¶ 41, § 1.) It is as hard for him to visualize what a gathering in Des Moines is like as it

would be for Brother Smith to describe to himself a meeting of church deputies in Chengtu. But Brother Li does know that over on the other side of the planet somewhere there does meet this body to which delegates are elected; that this body selects the *hui tus*, or bishops, those majestic foreign figures that occasionally swim into his ken; and that there are many laws and many customs that have their explanation in the mysterious phrase, "By action of the General Conference."

The government of the church comes closer to Brother Li through its bishops. Now they are all general superintendents, a move that sets on a level our leadership in all parts of the church. But India has some compensations to show for her restricted missionary bishopric in having authority in the hands of men who can talk directly with the preachers. The bishop is a man of great authority to Brother Li, and the incomprehensible manner in which he is

provided, like manna, adds to his impressiveness. He has treated Brother Li and his fellows marvelously well. But if you were a Chinese pastor, you can imagine the difficulties in the way of frank discussion with your bishop at appointment time if the only method by which you could tell him your troubles was through the interpretation of your foreign district superintendent or district missionary.

Next comes the Annual Conference, and here, be it said to the honor of Methodism, the native and the foreigner have always stood upon the same plane. The Chinese comes into the Annual Conference just as any candidate in America enters, and once in he has as much voice, theoretically at least, as anybody. Increasingly he is using that voice.

On the foreign field the large work conducted by the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society is reviewed annually in women's conferences, which are

nominally under the control of the Annual Conference, but really meet separately and largely solve their problems separately. These women's conferences are presided over by the bishops.

The active administrative agent is the district superintendent. He may be a foreigner or he may be a native. It is the boast of Methodism in such a land as China that she seeks to place Chinese in such positions with the utmost rapidity. In the report of the Board of Foreign Missions for 1919 (which does not enumerate all the districts in Europe) I find sixty-five citizens of countries other than the United States listed as district superintendents.

Then come the pastor, the local preacher, the exhorter, the class leader, the colporteur, the Bible woman, the gatekeeper, and all the group of Chinese workers (not to forget the teacher of the day school), none of them of slight importance in this enterprise of church building.

There are two significant modifications in practice of this theory of administration, both of which will markedly influence the mind of Brother Li as he ponders its success or nonsuccess.

The first deals with the relation of the missionary to the Annual Conference. Professor Fleming states in his *Devolution in Mission Administration* that the Methodist Episcopal Church is not bothered by the problem of the relation of foreign workers to the indigenous church because there is no division between mission and Conference, but all the missionaries are members of the Conference (compare pp. 101, 198). In theory this is so, but in practice there is certainly a powerful group composed of foreign missionaries, called the mission, and it, particularly through its finance committee, holds a financial check that must largely curtail the actual powers of the Annual Conference. In the Manual for Missionaries of the Board of Foreign Missions it is stated

that this finance committee of the mission has power to draw up and revise the budgets for the work, approve bills, purchase real estate, improve real estate, dispose of real estate, provide for emergencies that imperil life or property, determine the moving and traveling expenses of pastors, consider all financial applications that go to the Board, recommend furloughs and retirement for missionaries, "regulate the support of preachers and workers employed in the field," audit accounts, and nominate trustees to hold property. After reading over that list it can be understood why the pastors are desirous of obtaining representation on the mission finance committees. They are rapidly achieving that desire.

The second modification deals with the alleged power placed in the hands of the Chinese when he is appointed a district superintendent. Too often this power is more apparent than real. To be sure, it is sometimes an advance to

get the appearance, but I have yet to know of a single district where there did not stand behind the native district superintendent that non-disciplinary but none the less powerful figure, the foreign district missionary, or, as he was until 1920 suggestively called, the missionary-in-charge.

Attention has already been called to several recent events that suggest that this mechanism of administration is being adapted to the foreign field. We can recapitulate them briefly:

The abolishment of the limited missionary bishopric tends to do away with any derogatory implications that may have made leadership of the work outside the United States seem less important or honorable than leadership within.

The election of Bishop Anton Bast, and his assignment to residence at Copenhagen, hints at a precedent whereby citizens of foreign countries shall be elected as superintendents of the work in their native lands.

The enlargement of the powers of Central Mission Conferences, which will be more fully treated in a later chapter, indicates a growing recognition of the impossibility of adequately legislating for all the world in an American Conference.

The forbearance of the Board of Foreign Missions in its latest Manual from stipulating that all members of mission finance committees shall be foreign missionaries opens the way for the election of native members of such committees, and so makes it possible for the field to have some say as to how funds sent to it shall be used.

The action in at least one Conference in China whereby, when it is felt imperative that a foreign district superintendent shall be appointed, a Chinese is named to work with this foreigner as "counselor," seeking to have somewhat the same relation that the foreign district missionary holds to the Chinese district superintendent.

V

LESSENING LONG DISTANCE CONTROL

IN a previous chapter the British Empire was taken as a suggestion, in the political realm, of those ideas upon which it may be possible to build a world church. But a brief study of the British Empire shows that the problem which gives that remarkable body most concern is that of wisely placing the control of colonies within the hands of their inhabitants. It is a problem that has been solved in the case of the self-governing commonwealths, but has still to be solved in vast portions of the empire.

It is this same problem that will give the Methodist Episcopal Church most concern as it undertakes to readjust itself to the living of an international life. How are the parts of the church that have grown up continents distant from

the original "home" to be freed from long-distance control and given the shaping of their own destiny?

The demands of efficiency—to consider the subject on no higher level—require that such a change shall speedily come. It is impossible for any body to legislate intelligently for the life of a church half a world away. Bishop Thoburn recognized this when he wrote of the General Conference in his *Missionary Apprenticeship* as long ago as 1884:

. . . This great body, with its immense responsibilities and limited time, would never be able, as a permanent arrangement, to legislate for a church spread out over the whole globe. In the first place, it must necessarily be a physical impossibility. The work at hand could not be attended to satisfactorily, and it was manifest at a glance that the new and strange questions which must from time to time arise in twenty or more foreign countries, could never obtain a fair hearing, to say nothing of a proper solution from such a body. In the next place, it was quickly

evident that all questions from abroad would be pressed into American molds, and that antipodal legislation would not in every case adapt a proper means to a desired end. Lastly, it was constantly evident that every proposed measure would be, first of all, weighed in the balance with American interests, and if it were found to interfere with these, it would stand a very poor chance of adoption. One week at the General Conference convinced me that in the fullness of time there must be a legislative body, with carefully defined powers, in each separate nationality (p. 348).

I cast no question upon the *good will* of the General Conference. But every person who has had first-hand experience with the problem of applying the actions of the General Conference to the foreign field can sympathize with Bishop Stuntz when he says:

The longer thoughtful men have toiled at the task the more clear has it become to them that the "little black book" has been largely made for the United States by General Conference delegates, of whom an overwhelming

preponderance were from the United States and thought in terms of the land that had horized them from infancy (*The Christian Advocate*, July 9, 1914).

And not only does inefficiency dog the legislative body, with its quadrennial meetings. It is bound to limit the administrative organ, the Board of Foreign Missions, which largely controls the life of the church in mission lands during the forty-seven months between General Conferences. I am not criticizing the working of the Board of Foreign Missions. No one could have as intimate contact with that body as I have had and not come to appreciate its power. In all Protestantism—yes, and in Catholicism as well—there is not an agency doing more faithfully the tasks committed to it.

The trouble is not in the purposes, the spirit, or the organization of the Board. The trouble is that the Board is trying to do an impossible thing—administer vast affairs at a distance

of twelve thousand and more miles. And the nearer one stands to the center of that effort the more clearly one comes to see that inefficiency is bound to accompany such long-distance control.

As an example that will not violate any confidences, in 1919-20 one of the associate secretaries of the Board spent six months in making a first-hand study of conditions in China. He brought to this study an extensive background furnished by service in China as a missionary and in the Centenary campaign in America. When he returned to New York he had at his command, to supplement the knowledge thus gained, all the material in the files of the Board, all the extensive correspondence that is constantly going to the Board from the field, and the personal testimony of the large group of missionaries at that time in America on furlough. Yet this secretary has stated in letters sent to the missions that when he came, in the fall

of 1920, to prepare the case for China for presentation to the annual meeting of the Board, there were large gaps in his knowledge that he had no way of filling!

Business men know that it is seldom satisfactory to conduct big deals through correspondence. They will cross the Atlantic or the continent rather than trust to the mail or cable. Yet the Board of Foreign Missions is called upon by the church to conduct what it has itself named "the biggest business in the world" at infinite distance and in just that way. Only the mission committee that has sent off its letters, knowing that it will be two or three months before a reply can be received, or has received its coded cablegrams and spent half a night trying to decipher the meaning (and frequently guessing wrong) can appreciate how insurmountable are the obstacles to efficiency in long-distance control.

But worse than this is the fact that

the Methodist Episcopal Church will never reach the place where its non-American workers are completely satisfied as long as they are under absentee control. Many things may be done to make that control paternal and beneficent, but no man of spirit will ever be content until he is the master of his own destiny. The Board of Foreign Missions does exercise this foreign control. In the figure we have previously employed the General Conference is the Parliament, the Board of Foreign Missions is the government, and the mission, composed of the foreign workers in any field, is the viceroy.

Do not see in this any veiled attack upon the Board of Foreign Missions. At the present moment I would be the last to alter the position of that body. What powers it has are necessary and have come to it naturally with the growth of the church's missionary enterprise. It would have been impossible to have developed that enterprise to

its present state without the exercise of those powers. But I do believe that the logic of the situation shows that the *future* welfare of Methodism as a *world* church requires that the powers of legislation and administration now concentrated in America be increasingly delegated to the field.

Remember what these powers are. What can the General Conference do? According to the *Discipline*, the General Conference can, among other things, organize and fix the boundaries of Annual and Mission Conferences; elect, investigate, try, retire, and assign the bishops; elect the boards, the standing committees, an overwhelming majority of the connectional officers; pass upon decisions of bishops, judicial conferences and all other questions of law; authorize and discontinue Central Mission Conferences; vote upon union with other churches; and, to quote the comprehensive language of the *Discipline*, "make rules and regulations for

the church," subject to the six familiar limitations.

Now, looking at this from the viewpoint of Brother Li, this is a fairly complete equipment of powers to put into the hands of a body only two per cent of which has any real knowledge of his needs, is it not? But consider that the powers of the Board of Foreign Missions, a creation of the General Conference, come even more directly home to the governing of Brother Li's church life. The constitution of the Board is designedly general in its terms, but think of the way in which such powers as the following must affect the mind of a Chinese or Indian.

The Board appropriates great sums of money, and these appropriations almost completely condition the nature of the work that will be done in any area. Until very recently it has seemed to Brother Li and his fellows that these appropriations were largely made without reference to Chinese desires, and

this impression is not yet gone. A few weeks ago I was in one of the missions in China where a foreign missionary was trying to explain to a Chinese that certain work could not be opened, not because of the opposition of this foreigner but because the Board of Foreign Missions was financially embarrassed and could not appropriate for that purpose. And after the explanation was complete the Chinese, in departing, remarked: "All that you say is doubtless true, but I have noticed that for enterprises in which the foreigner is interested there are always funds."

The Board appoints workers. Not only does it control the number of *foreign* workers, and, in practice, very largely control their place of working, but it also, through its appropriations, is able largely to condition the number of *native* workers and the sort of work they shall do. Thus it may happen that the chance of Brother Li's son to become a well-educated leader in the next

Chinese generation will rest upon the decision of the Board in New York as to whether a staff shall be sent to open a middle school in Brother Li's territory.

The Board buys and holds real estate. It, the Board, as is right, holds the titles to millions of dollars' worth of property all over the earth. But this gives it the right to tell Brother Li just where his church or school shall be located and, by the character of the buildings placed thereon, what sort of work shall be done. And there is not, to my knowledge, a single Methodist church or school in China into which it is not possible for the foreigner representing the Board of Foreign Missions to come and completely change the character of its service, whether by direct order or by that species of "persuasion" that it is never wise to offend.

Such being the situation, the problem of consolidating our present far-flung missions into a world church, bound per-

manently together with bonds of mutual love and trust, becomes in large measure the problem of substituting for this long-distance, inefficient, impersonal, and too frequently misunderstood control, a direction that is part of the life that it is directing. The remainder of this little book is devoted to the suggestion of various steps that may be taken to bring this to pass.

VI

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CENTRAL CONFERENCE

THE key to unlock the problems that surround the building of a world church is found in the proper development of the functions of what are now known as Central Mission Conferences (compare *Discipline* 1920, ¶ 95). Those who have any interest in this international development may well commit that part of current Methodist law to memory, for out of it must come the church of the future.

The Central Conference is not the product of any theorizer in church administration, but an inevitable growth, due to the conditions surrounding the attempts of the General Conference to legislate for mission lands, as outlined in the previous chapter. Bishop Thoburn has not been the only Methodist to

see the impossibility of securing proper attention in the General Conference for the needs of lands outside the United States. No delegate, American or foreign, has ever given close study to the working of the body without sensing the same difficulty.

The result has been a tendency to cast the General Conference upon the mercy of the foreign delegates: "Tell us what you want and we will see that you get it"—an offer which, for all its generosity, is embarrassing to men and women who are thus asked to assume unreasonable responsibilities.

It is illustrative of the state of affairs in the General Conference that the body that met at Des Moines took vastly longer to debate the relative merits of Buffalo and Syracuse as a place of residence for the bishop of an American area than for the consideration of this same ¶ 95, which is likely to prove a step leading to a transformation of the entire life of the church.

In the *Discipline* of 1908—the year when the church felt the jolt of the formation of the Japan Methodist Church—there is a chapter devoted to the Central Mission Conference. The authorizations there, while making use of the permissive, rather than the mandatory form, give to these bodies the right to organize under order from the General Conference; to fix their own rules of membership; to supervise such educational, publishing and other connexional interests as may be committed to them by the Annual Conferences and missions; to vote by Conferences and missions; and the Central Conference of Southern Asia holds the right to fix the residences of the missionary bishops in Southern Asia. At that time some may have regarded such provisions as enough to hold the allegiance of the Japanese Methodists.

But further study of the *Discipline* shows that the chapter in question had stood practically unchanged (except for

the section concerning the residences of the missionary bishops of Southern Asia) since the General Conference of 1884! The Methodist Episcopal Church made practically no advance in its treatment of the church outside the United States between 1884 and 1920—thirty-six years! The more notable then is the remarkable enlargement of powers which we now find in ¶ 95, § 4 (2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8). From a body whose principal functions were comprised in a hazy permission to look after such educational, publishing, and other interests as the separate Conferences might delegate to it, we suddenly come upon a body constructed in this form:

1. It is organized at the authorization of the General Conference.

2. The rules of its composition are in its own hands.

3. It must meet at least once in four years.

4. It is presided over by a bishop or a president elected by itself.

5. It has (note that "may" is not used) supervision of the educational, industrial, publishing, and other connectional interests of the church within the area under its jurisdiction (without reference to any delegation of power by Conferences and missions as of old), "but never in contravention of the *Book of Discipline*, or the orders of the General Conference; and it shall have no authority to involve the Board of Foreign Missions in any financial responsibility, nor to hold or control the property of the Board without the official permission of the said Board."

6. It has power, subject to the approval of the bishops, to arrange courses of study for all workers, foreign and native, ministerial and lay, within its jurisdiction.

7. "In cooperation and collaboration with the Board of Foreign Missions and the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society," it is to direct the missionary

CENTRAL CONFERENCE 75

work and policy of the indigenous church.

8. It may simplify and adapt the Ritual for use in the area under its jurisdiction.

9. It may extend Article XXIII of the Articles of Religion to apply to the governments of the countries in which its work lies.

10. It has power "to make such adaptations regarding membership, special advices, worship, and the local ministry, not contrary to the *Discipline*, as the peculiar conditions of the field concerned call for."

11. It may, "subject to proper agreements with the Board of Foreign Missions," incorporate an Executive Board or Committee to carry on such work between sessions as is desired by the Central Conference.

12. It can "establish rules, rites, and ceremonies for the solemnization of marriage not contrary to the law of the country."

13. It can make rules and regulations "for the purchase, holding, and transferring of property not related to the Board of Foreign Missions and the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society."

14. Voting by Conferences and missions can, upon demand of one third of the Conferences or missions represented, be enforced in a Central Conference. In such a case a two-thirds majority of the Conferences and missions represented is required to complete an action.

15. It may fix the boundaries of the Annual Conferences within its jurisdiction, although the General Conference retains the right to determine the total number of Annual Conferences that may be organized within the territory of each Central Conference.

16. It may be discontinued only by the General Conference.

17. It must submit its journal for examination by the General Conference.

CENTRAL CONFERENCE 77

18. The Central Conference for Southern Asia, and between sessions its executive board, is authorized to fix the residences of the missionary bishops for southern Asia.

In such a body as this it should not be difficult for the church outside the United States to see the charter of a new era. Read over carefully the points herein mentioned, trying to imagine what may be the outgrowth of such privileges as are granted in the fifth, the seventh, the eighth, the tenth, or the thirteenth.

The powers authorized in the tenth point, for example, give a Central Conference almost unlimited control over the life of local churches within its jurisdiction, for the check "not according to the *Discipline*" prohibits only acts in clear antagonism to the statutes of that book. It is possible, under this authorization, to provide for regulations that will bear little resemblance to those governing the congregations of the Meth-

odist Episcopal Church in the United States.

Consider a hypothetical case. Suppose the Eastern Asia Central Conference believes that it is ridiculous to ask Chinese seeking admission as full members of the Methodist Episcopal Church whether or not they believe the doctrinal statements of the Articles of Religion. It thereupon draws up a ritual for admission into full membership omitting this question, for it has the right to simplify and adapt the Ritual, as well as to fix the conditions of church membership. Can this be regarded as "contrary to the *Discipline*"? Assuredly not, for the same *Discipline* that includes that question in the Ritual for admission gives the Central Conferences the right to alter the Ritual.

Other possibilities growing out of the present powers of a Central Conference will occur to mind as the legislation is studied.

It must therefore be admitted that

the General Conference of 1920 made a mighty and a significant step toward the formation of a world church when it wrote ¶ 95. Perhaps it was somewhat inspired to do so by some of the suggestions for the development of regional Conferences in the ill-starred plan of unification with the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. More likely it simply felt driven to such legislation by the knowledge that, unless some such action was taken, future General Conferences would find themselves responsible for decisions that they were not enough informed to make. At any rate, the paragraph is in the law of the church, and great will be the result thereof.

Is it complete? By no means. It represents a remarkable advance over the past, but the Central Conferences will not have reached the position they finally must occupy until they fix the conditions of entrance into the ministry; until they at least nominate (and preferably elect subject to confirmation by

the General Conference) the bishops who shall reside within their areas; until they shall have erected a system of benevolent societies adapted to their needs and been given power to elect the officers for the same, as well as any other connectional officers working within their limits; until they can fix the numbers as well as the boundaries of Conferences; until they have power to review the decisions of bishops and judicial conferences, subject to a later review by some supreme judicial body for the whole church; until they are able to provide for the taking over of the vast property now held in the name of the Board of Foreign Missions. Nor, finally, will we stop there. The day will ultimately come when each Central Conference will have its own *Book of Discipline*, its contents reviewed by the General Conference only to make sure that it does not conflict with the constitution of the church.

To many members of the Methodist

CENTRAL CONFERENCE 81

Episcopal Church it may come as a surprise to learn that these Central Conferences already have the power described in this chapter. The suggestion that these wide powers must be supplemented by such others as are here enumerated will not be welcomed. But if the Methodist Episcopal Church wants to stand permanently as a world church, it must realize that there is a price to pay. The development of the Central Conferences to the place sketched is a part of the price. And it is as well to become familiar with it now as later, for as each quadrennium brings its General Conference the church must be prepared to put added features of this decentralizing program into effect.

NOTE.—The General Conference of 1920 authorized the erection of a commission to study the entire question of the development of Central Mission Conferences and the administration of the church outside the United States. This commission has not yet been formed. If it is to function properly, it should come into being long enough before the General Conference of 1924 to make possible an extensive study of conditions and secure suggestions from a widely representative portion of the church. It is, however, encouraging that the church has taken this method of approach to its problem.

VII

DOCTRINE AND ORDER IN A WORLD CHURCH

ROMAN CATHOLICISM is responsible for creating the precedent of holding every part of a church, wherever located, to a conformance with the doctrinal expressions and forms of worship in use in every other part. Increasingly I am convinced that the successful democratic world church will have to break the trammels of this tradition.

Much of the doctrine and almost all of the forms of worship used in the Methodist Episcopal Church come out of an historical background that colors the life of the overwhelming majority of the members of the church in America. To be sure, pastors here and there feel that certain parts of the ritual do not speak naturally to the spiritual consciousness of their people and so intro-

duce alterations. But this is the exception. The order of service as adopted by the General Conference, and the Ritual, are generally followed throughout the American church, just as the Methodist Hymnal is generally used in our American congregations, because this seems the natural, normal way of worshiping.

In China this is not so. The Methodist Episcopal Church has been at work in parts of China for more than three generations, yet the forms in which it conducts its service are largely exotic. To the student of Christian progress I do not know any single phenomenon that is more disquieting, that seems to point less toward the growth of a truly indigenous church, than the sight of congregations (and what is true in our church is true in all) creaking their uncomprehending way through services that fit them no more than the oversize Prince Albert coats and high hats fit the politicians of Peking.

The restlessness of a congregation on the mission field is proverbial. Mainly, we are told, this is because the people have never been accustomed to an ordered worship of any kind. When one reads of the congregations of Constantinople in the days of Chrysostom this explanation seems correct. Yet one cannot help feeling that there would be less discord if there were more in the service that touched, even faintly, the chords of remembrance within the audience.

It is amusing to see a member of a congregation rise, clump to the front, and stand enraptured, watching the bishop who is trying to preach the Annual Conference sermon. (Amusing, that is, to all save the bishop.) But it suggests that the very act of the bishop in preaching is a thing so amazing, so foreign to the past experience of that particular member of the congregation, that it draws him as the bearded lady will draw a crowd to an American circus.

Consider the present order of service, which Chinese congregations struggle through as manfully as may be. Take first the element of music, which we regard as so essential to worship. Seven out of fourteen items in the present order are musical. In the larger chapels in China this music is furnished or led by a reed organ; in some city churches by a piano; here and there a pastor has overcome the cornet or accordion sufficiently to play hymns. But note that the list includes not a single true Chinese musical instrument. The hymns, with only a few exceptions, are attempted translations of those used in the West, still fitted to the tunes that we have evolved from a scale that is fundamentally different from the scale that bounds Chinese music. The resulting attempt of Chinese congregations, led by a foreign musical instrument, to sing foreign tunes, is bad enough. When you hear the singing in country chapels, where there is no instrument to lend a

helping hand, and no missionary chorister, the effect is bedlam.

So it happens that when my friend Uong Gang Huo, who is noted as one of the finest singers in Foochow, announces the first hymn at a Sunday morning service, he is forced to divest himself of all his native musical powers and attempt to lead his congregation in a form of "music" as unnatural to him as it is incomprehensible to them. Brother Li Ching Shen merely throws back his head, opens his mouth, expels the air from his lungs, and lets what will happen.

The words of the hymns are almost as incomprehensible as the tunes. These "translations" have practically all been made by foreigners. If you know the English original, you can sometimes recognize the Chinese version. There is no more difficult task in literature than the translation of poetry from one language to another. How many successful attempts of this kind have there been in

English? Then when you realize that the Chinese has definite rules for the construction of poetry that have not the faintest resemblance to the rules by which the poetry of the West is written, you will understand the heroism of the man who attempts to render "Lead, Kindly Light," in the ancient character. Yet the attempt has been made, and Chinese congregations are gallantly shrieking the result. Probably no foreigner cares to criticize these "translations." Certainly I do not. But I have talked with numbers of Chinese about them, and I have yet to find one who considers them as legitimate Chinese literature or as in most cases comprehensible to large parts of our congregations. As long as they survive, the Christian service of worship in China will remain an exotic affair.

Next we come to the recitation of the Apostles' Creed, another exotic, but too easily transplanted into the life of the Chinese church because of the notion

that being a Christian means the acceptance of a body of belief. I have had Chinese pastors tell me that, in their opinion, a man is a Christian when he gives assent to just about such a set of statements as are included in the Apostles' Creed. To the erection of this mechanical standard may be ascribed much of the formalism that already threatens the Chinese church. Yet, if we must have a creed in our services, by all means let it be such an historical statement as this, until the day when the Chinese mind shall be ready to produce its own apprehension of the bases of Christian belief.

Any responsive reading is almost out of the question, because of the illiteracy of large portions of the congregations, and because of an utter lack of comprehension of the nature and meaning of the Psalter. One is also constrained at times to wonder whether the Chinese service has yet reached the point where the rapid reading of long Scripture pas-

sages by the pastor is an exercise unto edification.

Only those who have heard it know how terrible a thing the chanting of the Gloria Patri can be in a Chinese congregation. If anywhere in the whole service the incongruity of the proceedings is symbolized, it is here. Yet a large part of our congregations faithfully perform this musical atrocity, without the slightest notion of what or why, let alone how.

The taking of the collection affords the mothers a happy interval in which to begin nursing their babies; the fathers a few moments in which to converse with their seatmates, and the whole congregation opportunity to relax from the strain of going through what has preceded and to gather strength for what is to come.

The sermon comes, and finally goes; the short prayer; another hymn; the benediction. And the audience disperses, knowing that it has been through

a performance that as definitely sets it off from the rest of its fellow countrymen as though it had ordered baked beans and apple pie for breakfast and eaten them with knife and fork. A considerable part of the charge of "foreign religion" that is constantly holding up the progress of the Kingdom in such a land as China may be traced straight to the forms of worship that have been imposed upon the infant church. For this *is* foreign worship, and there is no use attempting denial.

The Methodist Episcopal Church must adjust itself to the idea that these exotic forms must pass, and that the Chinese church will build its own methods of worshiping, which may be radically different from anything that the West has seen in Methodism. It is a good sign that the legal right to do this has already been granted to the Central Mission Conferences (§ 95, § 4). But there must be no misgiving or antagonism if this right, when exer-

cised, leads to some quite remarkable alterations.

Furthermore, the church abroad must work out its own church order. It must do this in regard to its officers. Just as the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States has developed a different set of officers from those of the British Wesleyan Church, so the Methodist Episcopal Church in China must ultimately develop an officary that differs from that in the parent land. It is not likely that this will involve the doing away with the district superintendency, but many other changes are sure to come.¹ At the present time, with not much more than half a century of history, the church in China has carried on a large part of its work through two

¹The question of the status of bishops is more likely to promote discussion than that of district superintendents. In the Japan Methodist Church, for example, the original compromise by which the Canadian Methodists were brought into the union provided for a bishop elected for a term of eight years, and eligible for reelection. Subsequent experience alarmed the Japanese church against autocratic tendencies in this arrangement, and the term has already been reduced to four years, and one bishop refused a reelection.

officers, neither of whom was known in the Discipline during the years in which they were proving their value—the district missionary and the Bible woman.

These changes will probably affect the local organizations of congregations even more vitally than the connectional interests. Study for a moment the duties of a pastor as given in ¶ 182 of the *Discipline*. There are twenty-nine rules there laid down, all of which are supposed to guide the Methodist pastor in China as well as in the United States. Of the twenty-nine it is safe to say that at least six cannot be applied in China to-day (how many American pastors observe ¶ 182, § 20?) and the whole list needs radical alteration to fit the Chinese field. This the Central Mission Conferences cannot yet do.

Or take the form by which a Quarterly Conference is to be conducted. I have heard some district superintendents in the United States expressing their opinions of these forms, and have

seen others do so. To what extent do you suppose that forms that are becoming unsuitable in the circumstances for which they were framed will fit such totally different circumstances as obtain on the mission field? Again the Central Mission Conference has no power of alteration.

It will probably be years before a Chinese Conference can, without foreign guidance, work its way through the mazes of ¶ 80, applying the correct rulings to the various cases of those in the course of study. I have never yet been in a Conference session in China that did not get more or less tangled up in those requirements, although my experience has been limited. But how long is the church in China to be compelled to face questions to which the only answer is, "It is impossible," or "There ain't no such animal"? Bishop Welch, in making the Episcopal Address to the Eastern Asia Central Conference of 1920, suggested that the church on the

mission field be given the right to go through the *Discipline* systematically, seeking exemption from the regulations that are inapplicable outside the United States.

Lest this chapter overrun all bounds, let me summarily state a few personal conclusions, born out of my study of the church abroad.

It is probable that when the church in other lands really comes to the control of its own life it will radically alter the whole scheme of meetings that has been fastened upon it, and the purposes for which many meetings are held.

It is certain that there will be sweeping changes in the regulations for the conduct of ministry and laity, and in the rules whereby breaches of the law are to be corrected.

It is questionable whether the church in these lands will forever require as a test of membership acceptance of such an exotic document as the twenty-five Articles of Religion. It is difficult to

conceive of any vitality in a world church built upon such a foundation.

I think that finally one of the costs of a world church that we will have to face and pay is the return to doctrinal standards so simple that any child can understand them and so reasonable that any child will accept them. We will have to swing away from that monument of Anglo-Saxon Protestantism which John Wesley, in a moment of anxiety when he felt his grip slipping, wished upon the Methodists of America. We will have to swing back to that truer basis which Wesley expressed when he wrote:

The distinguishing marks of a Methodist are not his opinions of any sort. . . . Is thy heart right, as my heart is with thine? I ask no further question. If it be, give me thy hand. Dost thou love and serve God? It is enough. I give thee the right hand of fellowship ("The Character of a Methodist").

Or again:

One circumstance more is quite peculiar to the people called Methodists; that is, the terms upon which any person may be admitted to their society. They do not impose, in order to their admission, any opinions whatsoever. Let them hold particular or general redemption, absolute or conditional decrees; let them be Churchmen or Dissenters, Presbyterians or Independents, it is no obstacle. Let them choose one mode of baptism or another; it is no bar to their admission. The Presbyterian may be a Presbyterian still; the Independent or Anabaptist use his own mode of worship. So may the Quaker; and none will contend with him about it. They think, and let think. One condition and one only is required—a real desire to save their soul (“Thoughts Upon a Late Phenomenon”).

Or again:

“Is a man a believer in Jesus Christ, and is his life suitable to his profession?” are not only the *main*, but the *sole* inquiries I make in order to his admission into our society (*Journal*, May 14, 1765).

To some this attitude may seem dangerous. They will declare that a

church, even a world church, built upon such broad foundations, is hardly worth the having. They will contend that it is not impossible to impose the standards of the twenty-five Articles on Methodism the world around.

In China I think that is true. It will probably be possible to make men swear that they believe in the doctrines set forth in those Articles for years to come. But to what purpose? The fact is not altered that those Articles are utterly foreign to the spirit and genius and understanding of the Chinese Christian. He may signify his readiness to accept them, but in a church where many, many members find it almost too difficult to meet the present requirements for admission (the ability to repeat the Lord's Prayer, Ten Commandments, Apostles' Creed, and familiarity with the story of the life of Christ in some form and the ritual for baptism, admission into the church, and the Lord's Supper) what reality can there be be-

hind such an acceptance? Spiritually the church cannot afford to build its life on such a form of empty words.

Methodism is not an order, but a spirit. It stands for vitality in religion. And vitality will be attained in the Methodist Episcopal Church only when the world around our congregations are gathering about standards and using forms and methods that convey meaning and call forth real confidence from within. To have a world church we must be content to leave the ordering of the details of the life of that church in other lands to the bodies representing that life as they shall hereafter arise.

VIII

COMMON AGENCIES IN A WORLD CHURCH

MANY Methodists, having read thus far, will begin to fear lest the church depicted is a unity in name only—an international confederation that might as well be called by any other title and in which the component parts have small vital relationship. It thus becomes necessary for us to suggest in detail what the organization of this church might be, and thus to show that, however real the powers of self-control possessed by the national units, there would still be, including them all, a living international unity, not a whit different essentially from the Methodist Episcopal Church we now know.

There will be a General Conference. Whether that body will continue to ex-

ercise judicial powers is a question that only church-wide discussion can answer. Personally, I would look with more confidence to the erection of a semipermanent supreme court for the whole church, possibly reserving to the General Conference the right to review judicial decisions. But that is not vital. In order not to introduce too many elements into this discussion let us suppose that the General Conference continues to act as a judicial body.

What sort of a body will this General Conference be? Certainly it will be representative, composed of elected delegates—the elections probably being made by the Central Conferences. (Connectional officers will probably be excluded from voting membership.) It will be a much smaller body than the present General Conference, much smaller even than the General Conference will be after the adoption of the pending constitutional amendment. It will, at the beginning, certainly meet

quadrennially, and sentiment and tradition may be able to hold it to a quadrennial schedule. It will not be restricted to meeting in the United States, for it represents a *world* body, and the peculiar interests of the church in the United States will be cared for by the American Central Conference. It will act as the unifying body for the church. To do this it will hold the power to set up and discontinue Central Conferences. It will enact and maintain a simple Constitution for the entire church, and retain authority to see that the enactments of the *Books of Discipline* of the various Central Conferences do not controvert this Constitution. It will confirm the elections of bishops made by the Central Conferences (an act that, as time passes, will become more a symbol of unity than a threat of veto). While the Central Conferences will doubtless demand the power to set the term of and retire their bishops, the bishops should, in the event of trial, have the right to

carry the case to the General Conference. In the election of the leaders of the world-wide connectional administrative boards, to be mentioned in a moment, the General Conference will vitally influence the whole life of the church, and these connectional boards must submit their constitutions and their work to the General Conference for approval just as the great boards in America recognize their relation to the present General Conference. If proposals for union with other bodies in any part of the world arise, these shall not be consummated pending approval by the General Conference. The legal decisions made by bishops and judicial conferences shall finally come to this central body for review. Every four years it will give the church and the world a comprehensive survey of the work of Methodism for the previous quadrennium, and will set forth the general outlines of the program upon which the denomination, the world around,

shall advance during the succeeding period.

To this General Conference delegates will be elected from the Central Conferences. There are now six Central Mission Conferences in the Methodist Episcopal Church, with the authorization (§ 522, § 17) to increase the number in Europe during the present quadrennium if that seems desirable. As soon as the church really turns itself to placing its whole life on one plane the restriction implied in the word "Mission" will be eliminated, and there will be erected a Central Conference for the United States. It is probable that the Methodist Episcopal Church a hundred years from now will comprise a dozen Central Conferences.

Each of these Central Conferences will provide the distinctive types of connectional benevolent boards that will most effectively meet its own problems. But at the same time there will be required connectional boards, working

through the entire church, under the authority of the General Conference, and these will in many respects prove the strongest unifying influence in the world church.

What will these general boards be? Only the experience of the years can finally answer that question, but it seems probable that the conduct of a world church will require at least five administrative bodies.

There will be a Board of Missions. It will not be a Board of Home Missions or a Board of Foreign Missions, but a Board of Missions, working, as we shall see, through organizations in each Central Conference to make sure that advance never halts on any of our fields. It will pool our missionary effort in every land, wiping out the false distinctions between home and foreign work that now embarrass. It will bring to the Methodists of America the appeal for funds to carry on the mission work that must be done in Peking; but

fifty years hence it will be equally effective to bring to the Methodists of Peking the appeal for work that must be done in Alaska. It will have one common missionary budget for the whole world, with its parts apportioned to the various lands for raising, and its expenditures, while under the general care of this international board, directly supervised by the Board of Missions of each Central Conference. To the general board will be given the vast power of approving the budgets submitted yearly by the mission boards of the Central Conferences, and it will act as a clearing house between these.

Probably it will be wise to have an international Board of Education, working in close accord with the Board of Missions. The power of the church during the next hundred years depends not only upon her clear conception of the service that is required to establish the kingdom of God, but equally upon her ability to impregnate mankind with

enthusiasm for the expression of this service. This is a task of education. To undertake seriously this task a body will be required that shall see to it that in every land where the Methodist Episcopal Church is at work there is available for her constituency a fully rounded education, measuring up to the highest standards and thoroughly Christian. Such a body will work hand in hand with the Board of Missions to insure adequate financial support for this educational enterprise, and with the proper organizations of the General Conferences to see that its ideals are realized.

There will be a Board of Young People's Work. The world around we are awakening to the knowledge that the church's hope lies in its youth, and its ruin in their neglect. Such a board will be alive to the necessity of an adequate place for young people in the life of our church in every land. This is no mere academic problem. In many fields,

where the churches have grown as a result of evangelistic effort for the conversion of the mature, there is hardly a beginning made in this direction. Again, this general board will work through Central Conference bodies, but the main divisions of its task are plain. It will, on the one hand, cooperate with the Board of Education to insure an effective instructional approach to the young life of the church, developing all church schools to the highest possible degree, and on the other it will see that adequate expressional outlet is provided, through such organizations as the Epworth League, for the ideals thus planted.

There will be a Board of Publication—a Book Concern. It will be The Methodist Book Concern of the present, the most powerful denominational publishing house in existence, with its past trammels removed, so that its power can work for the establishment of the Kingdom in all the world. Clearly, it will

have to work in close cooperation with the Board of Missions and the other boards. The present policy, whereby its surplus is diverted to the payment of obligations that belong squarely upon the shoulders of the church membership, must be changed, and every cent that remains after the payment of running expenses must be put into Christian propaganda. In addition, this body should conduct a great clearing house of information and inspiration as to the progress of the Kingdom in all lands, working, through church papers and other means, to supplement the efforts of the Board of Education in securing a church that, in all its parts, can think and pray and live in world terms.

There will be a Board of Conference Claimants, a body that will coordinate the efforts of similar boards in all the Central Conferences and keep this matter upon the conscience of the church until the Indian evangelist and the veteran of the American Conference can

look forward together in serenity to the sunset hours.

How will these general boards work? It has been necessary, as they have been named, to suggest the answer to that question. They will be composed of representatives from *all* the fields. They will find in each Central Conference the boards which the Central Conferences have established as best fitted in their areas to care for the particular work in which these general boards are interested.¹ They will advise with these bodies as they lay out their policies; they will keep them in close touch with simi-

¹Some of the developments indicated may take place more rapidly than the argument suggests. For example, on June 22, 1921, the Chinese members of the Directing Committee of the China Centenary Movement of the Methodist Episcopal Church—all of them outstanding leaders in Chinese Methodism—proposed the formation of a Chinese Missionary Society, to be organized, supported, manned, and directed by Chinese. Their project has been enthusiastically indorsed and is now in process of being carried into effect. It thus seems certain that before the next General Conference meets there will be in China a society sending out missionaries into unevangelized regions, using for the purpose funds raised in China, and depending for direction upon Chinese leadership. A similar movement is under way in India.

lar bodies in other parts of the church; they will approve their budgets and see that the sums thus needed are provided—the wealth of the whole church being kept at the service of all its parts; and they will, by this cooperative service, make plain that, however powerful the element of self-government, the Methodist Episcopal Church is one body in all the world.

IX

THE TIME LIMIT

DOES the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States realize the strength of the forces working toward changes in administration in other lands? Probably not. To most American Methodists the action of 1907, setting aside the Japan Methodist Church, came as a surprise, even though it was the result of years of agitation. I have heard many say that the church was stampeded into that action. There is no reason to be stampeded into the future readjustments that must come in other lands if we will take warning from what is going on at this moment.

We have already spoken of the growth of a nationalistic spirit, characterizing every Asiatic country in which the Methodist Episcopal Church is at work. But this spirit is not confined to

Asia. Is Mexico any more inclined to be treated as a dependency of the United States than Japan? Have we nothing to learn from the changing attitude of the South American nations toward the Monroe Doctrine? How long can we expect *dependency* to satisfy in any part of our church?

The increasing ability of the native church to support its own life financially must be recognized. In the last year before the Boxer uprising the churches in China were reported as raising for all purposes \$24,285. In 1920 they raised \$76,465, a sum that would have been larger had exchange between gold and silver been normal. We have already seen that in 1919 the amount raised by the young churches was 78 per cent of the sum sent to the fields by the Board of Foreign Missions. And if you speak of the change brought about by the Centenary, you must remember that in China at least (and I believe in several other lands)

one of the Centenary goals set before each church is the attainment of self-support, which is defined as the payment of current expenses, including the salary budget for pastor or pastors, Bible women, institutional church workers, its apportionment of the salaries of bishop and district superintendent, and the making of a contribution to all the regular benevolences (compare *China's Challenge and the Methodist Reply*, p. 33).

A rapidly growing membership must also be taken into account. It took the first missionary of the Methodist Episcopal Church in China a full term of service to win his first convert. Between 1913 and 1919, a similar length of time, the membership of the church grew from 41,360 to 73,661, or at a rate of 43 per cent. In 1901 the Board of Foreign Missions reported 189,854 members of the Methodist Episcopal Church in foreign lands. In 1920 it reported 541,284 members, an increase

of 185 per cent. Two or three years ago the statisticians discovered that it was only the growth upon the foreign field that saved the church from an absolute loss in membership. And at the present time there are Conferences outside the United States that are forced to limit their gains to so many a year, in order that they may give some semblance of Christian instruction to those who are admitted. If there were only a slight lowering of the bars, only a bit more readiness to accept candidates for church membership, there are parts of our field where our rolls could be doubled every year. In China, for example, one of the goals of the Centenary Movement has been a doubling of church membership. But so easy is this, and so unfitted do the pastors feel themselves to cope with the task of instruction thus raised, that many have begun to suggest that that goal be set aside in favor of one providing for the better instruction of those already in

the church in preparatory membership. I think it altogether likely that before the end of this century there will be many more members of the Methodist Episcopal Church outside than inside the borders of the United States.

Finally, there is the growth of an educated, indigenous leadership. We are beginning to reap the harvest of our schools, and here is the real center of the desire for larger powers of self-government. The condition in these foreign lands is not yet ideal. We still have to depend to a great extent upon men with hardly more than the rudiments of formal education for our leadership. But there are bright spots, and facts conducive to thought. Consider, for instance, what it means to have in the North China Conference, out of seventy-four Chinese members of Conference, thirty-five who are college graduates! I doubt if there is an Annual Conference in the United States that can surpass that proportion. When

such conditions as this begin to appear the time is at hand for a lessening of long-distance control. We must give such men as these added scope for their powers or we cannot hope to hold them in the service of our church. I know perfectly well what many missionaries will say in this regard. They will claim that they have accepted this principle for years, but that they have been unable to find the Chinese (or Indians or Latins or whatever the nationality in question) who are ready to undertake responsibilities. I do not know any text more often quoted on the mission field than "He must increase, but I must decrease." Nor any less applied. The only way to hand over responsibility is to hand it over, and the missionary and the church must see that this will generally involve the surrender of some present efficiency in order to insure a future indigeneity. It is a part of the cost of a world church that must be paid.

Taking into effect the influence of these four forces, and especially of the first and last—the growth of national spirit and the increase in trained indigenous leadership—it is my estimate that the Methodist Episcopal Church has until 1932 to readjust its life to the requirements of a world organization along the lines suggested in this tract.

This may be dismissed as an individual estimate, but it has been made by one who has had somewhat unusual opportunities for intercourse with the indigenous leadership of our church in one of its major mission fields. And I know that others, with similar opportunities, do not delay the day of our testing as long as that.

Indeed, we cannot dream of waiting until then to act. We cannot let the years pass, as we did between 1884 and 1920, without action. This is not to be any desperate, eleventh-hour, Day-of-Judgment setting of our house in order. No, for we have already entered upon

our period of readjustment. The change that began in 1920 with the enlargement of the powers of the Central Mission Conference and the election of racial bishops with full episcopal powers must continue in 1924 and 1928. By 1932 the change to a world church, organized upon a decentralized plan, should be complete.

This is the cost of a world Methodism. Is it worth the price? For this readjustment will involve the abolishment of some official places; it will close doors of personal ambition; it will bring to the church in America discomforts and even losses—growing pains that are bound to accompany wide-spreading changes. It is useless to seek to purchase such a body as we have dreamed upon any ecclesiastical bargain counter.

But if the price is paid, we shall have one body, bound together in love and confidence, ready to stand in all the world as a witness to the power of the gospel to cast aside the hindering gar-

ments of nationalism and set up a compacted interest of righteousness and good will. Any price that will secure that is worth paying.

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